



## MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES

*Maryland's Social Services Agency*



### PRESS RELEASE

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### **DHR REMINDS TEACHERS, EDUCATORS, OTHERS THAT THEY HAVE A DUTY TO REPORT SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE AND /OR NEGLECT**

*If you suspect a child may be in danger, report it!*

BALTIMORE – With school starting, the Maryland Department of Human Resources (DHR) reminds teachers, police officers, and health practitioners that the law requires them to report suspected instances of abuse or neglect. During last year, DHR investigated over 56,000 allegations of abuse and substantiated over 34,000 of those allegations.

Children will be interacting with new people, traveling new routes, navigating new situations, and potentially facing new challenges, including the possibility of becoming the victim of abuse and /or neglect. As adults, we must be prepared to say something if we suspect a child is being harmed.

Everyone should report suspected abuse and neglect, but some are mandated to report. **You are a mandated reporter if you are one of the following:**

- Health Practitioner
- Educator
- Human Service Worker
- Police Officer

Anyone that makes a "good faith" report is immune from civil liability and criminal penalty.

#### **What should you look for?**

A child might be potentially experiencing physical abuse if he or she

- Has frequent injuries or unexplained bruises, welts, or cuts
- Is always watchful and "on alert", as if waiting for something bad to happen
- Has injuries that appear to have a pattern such as marks from a hand or belt
- Shies away from touch, flinches at sudden movements, or seems afraid to go home
- Wears inappropriate clothing to cover up injuries, such as long-sleeved shirts on hot days

A child might be potentially neglected if he or she

- Wears clothes that are ill-fitting, filthy, or inappropriate for the weather
- Has consistently poor hygiene is (un-bathed, matted and unwashed hair, noticeable body odor)
- Has untreated illnesses and or physical injuries
- Is frequently unsupervised, [or] left alone, or allowed to play in unsafe situations and environments
- Is frequently late or missing from school

A child might be potentially experiencing abuse if he or she

- Has trouble walking or sitting
- Makes strong efforts to avoid a specific person, without an obvious reason
- Doesn't want to change clothes in front of others or participate in physical activities
- Has an STD or becomes pregnant, especially if under age 14
- Runs away from home

A child might be potentially showing the signs of mental injury if he or she

- Is excessively withdrawn, fearful, or anxious about doing something wrong
- Shows extremes in behavior (extremely compliant or extremely demanding; extremely passive or extremely aggressive)
- Doesn't seem to be attached to the parent or caregiver
- Acts either inappropriately like an adult (taking care of other children) or inappropriately like an infant (rocking, thumb-sucking, tantrums)

Warning signs do not automatically mean a child is being abused. However, such signs may draw your attention to the child and the child's situation and reveal additional warning signs.

If you suspect something, say something. Call your local department of social services, or a local law enforcement agency.

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